Louisiana Crime Cleanup Promised by McKeithen

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Cites New 'Information' from Life Staff

By ED RICKARDS

NEW YORK (AP) — Louisiana Governor John J. McKeithen said Tuesday night Life Magazine had supplied him with "information we did not have" about organized crime in his state, and "with that information we are going to clean Louisiana up."

McKeithen made the statement as he emerged from a three-hour closed door meeting with Life editors.

The governor said he wanted to discuss a series of three Life articles that pinpointed Louisiana as a center of Cosa Nostra activity.

"Just say that I am most appreciative for the information that Life Magazine has given us this afternoon," he said, refusing to elaborate.

"It has given us information about our state and the people who are in it . . . we leave here with information we did not have."

DECLINE COMMENT

The author of the series, Sandy Smith, crime reporter, and Jerome S. Hardy, publisher, and George P. Hunt, managing editor, represented the magazine at the parley. They declined all comment afterwards.

Before the meeting McKeithen denied he had offered to resign if Life's charges of racketeering in his state were proven.

"I did not say that I would resign if racketeering is found in the state. I said I wasn't aware of racketeering in the state," said McKeithen, on a surprise trip to New York to confer with Life's staff.

"I believe the people of the state have confidence in my integrity," McKeithen told newsmen. "As a matter of fact, Life has not questioned my integrity.

"It has questioned the integrity of one of my former aides,

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but it hasn't questioned my integrity at all."

In its current issue Life said its earlier articles dealt in part "with Cosa Nostra's hoodlum empire and how it is flourishing, with a remarkable degree of official tolerance, under McKeithen's and (New Orleans Dist. Atty. Jim) Garrison's very noses."

The magazine noted that McKeithen had denied any knowledge of racketeering in his state and said:

"As for any sugegstion that the mob has wielded influence in his administration, the governor said, "The people of this state will have my resignation so fast it will make their heads swim, if the evidence of such influence is found to exist."

McKeithen, 49, is a Democrat and protege of former Gov. Earl K. Long. After service in the Legislature and the state Public Service Commission, he won an upset victory for the governorship in 1964.

He flew to New York with six aides, saying that the Life articles "are awful publicity which was a surprise."

"We are determined to do what is required to keep that type of publicity away from Louisiana," he said before going into conference in the Time-Life building in Rockefeller Center.

There was some dispute over who suggested the meeting. A Life spokesman said the governor had requested it. McKeithen said the magazine had offered to disclose additional information.